



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Patty Ritchie

Suny Drops Plan to Merge Canton-Potsdam Presidents

PATTY RITCHIE December 6, 2011

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Senator's Efforts Seen as Key to Preserving Colleges' Separate Identities

State Senator Patty Ritchie today announced that SUNY administrators have pulled the plug on a controversial plan to eliminate one of two president's positions at a pair of North Country colleges. SUNY officials notified Senator Ritchie of the decision late last week.

"I am pleased that SUNY has dropped this idea, which threatened the identity and independence of both the Canton and Potsdam campuses," Senator Ritchie said, as she announced the decision to a group of faculty and students at SUNY Canton this morning. "This move will go far to relieving the uncertainty and anxiety that overshadowed the colleges' futures."

Senator Ritchie helped lead the effort to preserve separate identities for the two colleges by ensuring that each maintained independent leadership. She introduced legislation (S.5581) that would require a president at each SUNY campus.

“There is a need to continue to cut costs and expenses throughout state government—including SUNY—and I strongly support efforts to increase collaboration and shared services between campuses to make sure that more tuition and tax dollars stay in the classroom, so that students get the quality instruction they need, and employers demand. But preserving both colleges’ unique identities and independence requires strong, local and accountable leadership that only separate presidencies can provide.

“I wish to thank the SUNY Central administration for listening to the members of our community who stood up to this proposal, and raised their voices in support of two institutions that are incredibly important to our communities and our local economy,” Senator Ritchie said.

Senator Ritchie immediately rejected the shared presidents plan when it was unveiled last spring, calling it a threat to the colleges’ independence that would have unraveled much of the progress and growth that had occurred in recent years, particularly at SUNY Canton.

Last month, SUNY’s Board of Trustees gave the campuses until next July 15 to identify ways to achieve savings by sharing administrative functions. But those savings will no longer include eliminating the President’s office of one of the campuses, officials said. The Board also reaffirmed the roles of volunteer College Councils in reviewing candidates for College Presidents.